



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TEXARKANA HOTEL MANAGER SENTENCED FOR HURRICANE RELATED FRAUD

(Texarkana, TX) United States Attorney Matthew D. Orwig announced today that a 64-year-old Atlanta, Texas woman has been sentenced for submitting false claims to the Red Cross following Hurricane Katrina.

DENA FUSELIER was sentenced to four years of federal probation for wire fraud in connection with her job as manager of the Ramada Inn in Texarkana, Texas. Fuselier was sentenced today by United States District Judge David Folsom.

According to information presented in court, shortly after Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, the Ramada Inn in Texarkana, Texas entered into an agreement with the American National Red Cross to house evacuees. The Red Cross agreed to pay for or reimburse the Ramada Inn at a rate of \$54.00 per night for each room provided to an evacuee or evacuee's family. Fuselier was employed as general manger of the Ramada Inn at this time, in which capacity she instructed employees of the Ramada Inn to check each evacuee into the hotel for a 14-day period. Fuselier also instructed the Ramada Inn employees to maintain evacuees on the hotel's computer

system as if they were still guests if the evacuee should check-out before the end of the 14-day period. Fuselier then instructed hotel employees to transfer the checked-out evacuee from their original room to an "off-market" room. Off-market rooms are those rooms at the Ramada Inn which are under renovation or used for storage and not available to house hotel guests. False billing statements were then sent to the Red Cross. The total amount of over-billing to the Red Cross was \$19,980.00.

Fuselier was indicted by a federal grand jury on May 4, 2006. She pleaded guilty to five counts of wire fraud on August 7, 2006.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force – chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division – includes the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorney, and others.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Barry Bryant.

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